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AUTHOR Narang, H. L.
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ABSTRACT

On the premise that it is important for students to benefit from and interrelate field experiences to on-campus experiences, this paper lists specific activities designed to help teacher education students gain the most from their field experiences so that they can learn to teach reading effectively in elementary school. The paper is divided into four sections describing: (1) activities related to observing and interviewing the cooperating teacher; (2) activities based on observing and interviewing students; (3) activities for teaching and evaluating; and (4) activities designed for on-campus use. (RS)

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IMPROVING READING INSTRUCTION THROUGH FIELD-BASED EXPERIENCES

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H.L. Narang
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada S4S 0A2

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IMPROVING READING INSTRUCTION THROUGH FIELD-BASED EXPERIENCES

Concerns about the gaps between theory and practice in teacher education are well-known. The Faculties and Colleges of Education have attempted to respond to this criticism by integrating field experiences in their programs. Generally, field experiences are highly valued by students. However, there are issues related to them that are debated at many levels. The voluntary participation by the cooperating teacher, design of the field experiences (half days, full days, once a week, block of time, etc.), placement of field experiences before, during, or after methodology courses, and the role of the faculty advisor are topics of interest among varied professional groups.

Regardless of when students are provided field experiences, it is important that they benefit from them and are able to interrelate them to on-campus experiences. When students are in school they engage in a variety of activities - observing, interviewing, discussing, teaching, and reflecting upon what they have done. This paper attempts to provide specific activities to help students gain the most from their field experiences so that they can understand and learn to teach reading effectively.

The purpose of this paper is to present a list of field-based activities related to reading instruction in elementary schools. The activities are divided into three sections.

Section A describes activities related to observing and interviewing the cooperating teacher.

Section B lists activities that are based on observing and interviewing students.

Section C contains teaching and evaluation related activities.

In order to facilitate an understanding of reading methods courses, a list of on-campus activities is included in Section D.

SECTION A

Observing and Interviewing the Cooperating Teacher

1. Observe your cooperating teacher for three reading lessons. Describe the general approach and specific steps used by the teacher in teaching reading.

2. Observe your class to determine which children are not interested in reading. Now observe and/or interview your teacher to find out what s/he does to encourage these children to read.

3. Describe special needs/learning disabled children in your class. How does your teacher teach reading to these children?

4. How does your teacher evaluate student progress in reading? Describe how the teacher prepares the report card for a student.

5. Describe classroom routines and classroom management strategies used by your cooperating teacher during a reading lesson.

6. Observe and/or interview your teacher to find out how s/he groups students for various reading activities.

SECTION B

Observing and Interviewing Students

1. Observe a pre-school child or a group of children learning about reading and writing. Record what you see and hear as children interact with written language.

2. Set up a book display for your class and introduce some of the books to children. Observe how children use these materials and interact with their peers. Write a report based on this experience.

3. Observe children during a recreational reading period and write a report on your observations.

4. Observe students during group discussion and write a report on the advantanges and disadvantanges of group discussion as a teaching method/strategy.

5. Observe students during a readers' workshop and write a report of your observation of the activities (planned and spontaneous). Also comment on how well the workshop went.

SECTION C

Teaching and Evaluating

1. Select a story and read it aloud to your class. Describe the experience.

2. Teach a reading lesson using DRA/DR-TA lesson plan. Reflect on your successes and failures. You may use a checklist.

3. Work with a group of children and guide them in dramatizing a story. Make notes of class reactions and comments.

4. Prepare and teach a content area lesson using a reading selection from social studies or science. Write a reflective report on how your lesson went.

5. Prepare and teach a lesson on note-taking and making summaries in a content area. Submit your lesson plan including self-reflection on your teaching.

6. Prepare your class for a cloze test. When students are prepared, administer the test to your class. Analyze the results for placement or grouping. Also analyze the responses of a student in terms of his/her strengths and weaknesses.

7. Administer an IRI/RMI to a student and analyze the results. Write a report on the strengths and weaknesses of the student and recommendmeasures to improve his/her reading.

SECTION D

On-campus Reading Activities

1. Reflect on your early experiences with reading. What helped and hindered the process of literacy in your life.

2. Analyze a reading/language arts textbook used in your school in terms of its content. Use the checklist as discussed in your methods class.

3. Estimate the readability\comprehensibility of a school textbook.

4. Prepare a DRA/DR-TA lesson plan based on a story or a poem from a textbook.

5. Prepare lesson plans for direct instruction in the following skills/strategies:

   a. word recognition
   b. vocabulary development
   c. comprehension
   d. study

6. Prepare an annotated list of children/adolescent literature appropriate for a grade level.

7. Prepare an integrated unit plan with a focus on teaching reading.

8. Write a poem given a model. Share it with your class.

9. Develop a checklist for editing and proofreading. Select two students as editors and have them prepare a book of poetry written by your class.

10. Analyze the reading miscues made by an elementary student and describe strategies (including materials and activities) that you might use to improve his reading performance.